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Frances Fowler Allen.

The Story of Westminster:
Westminster Presbyterian
Church, Springfield, Illinois
October 7, 1956

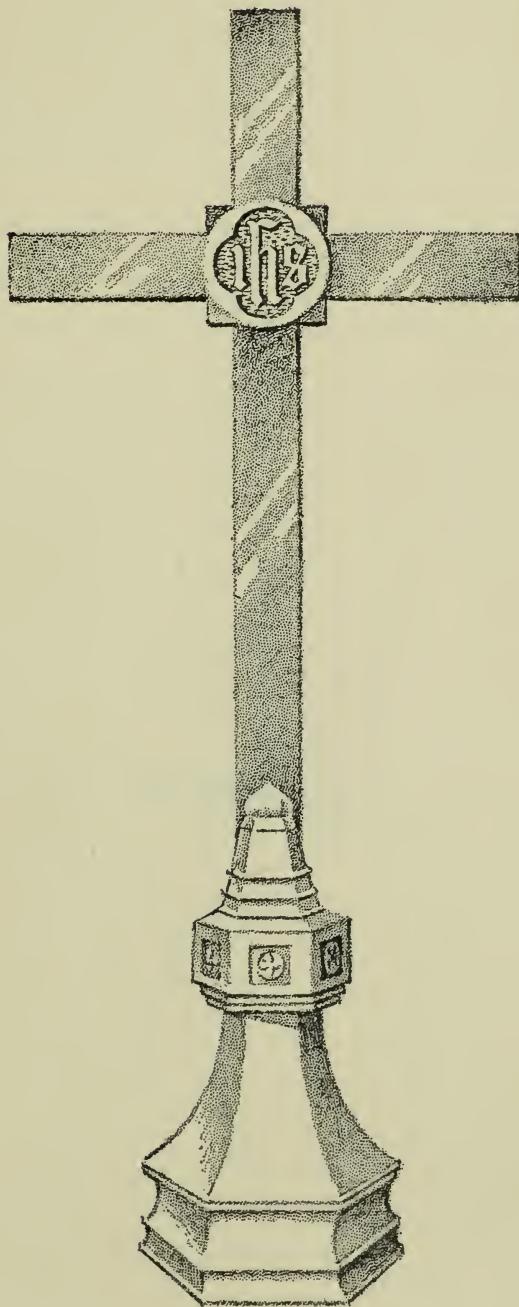
ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



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The Story of Westminster



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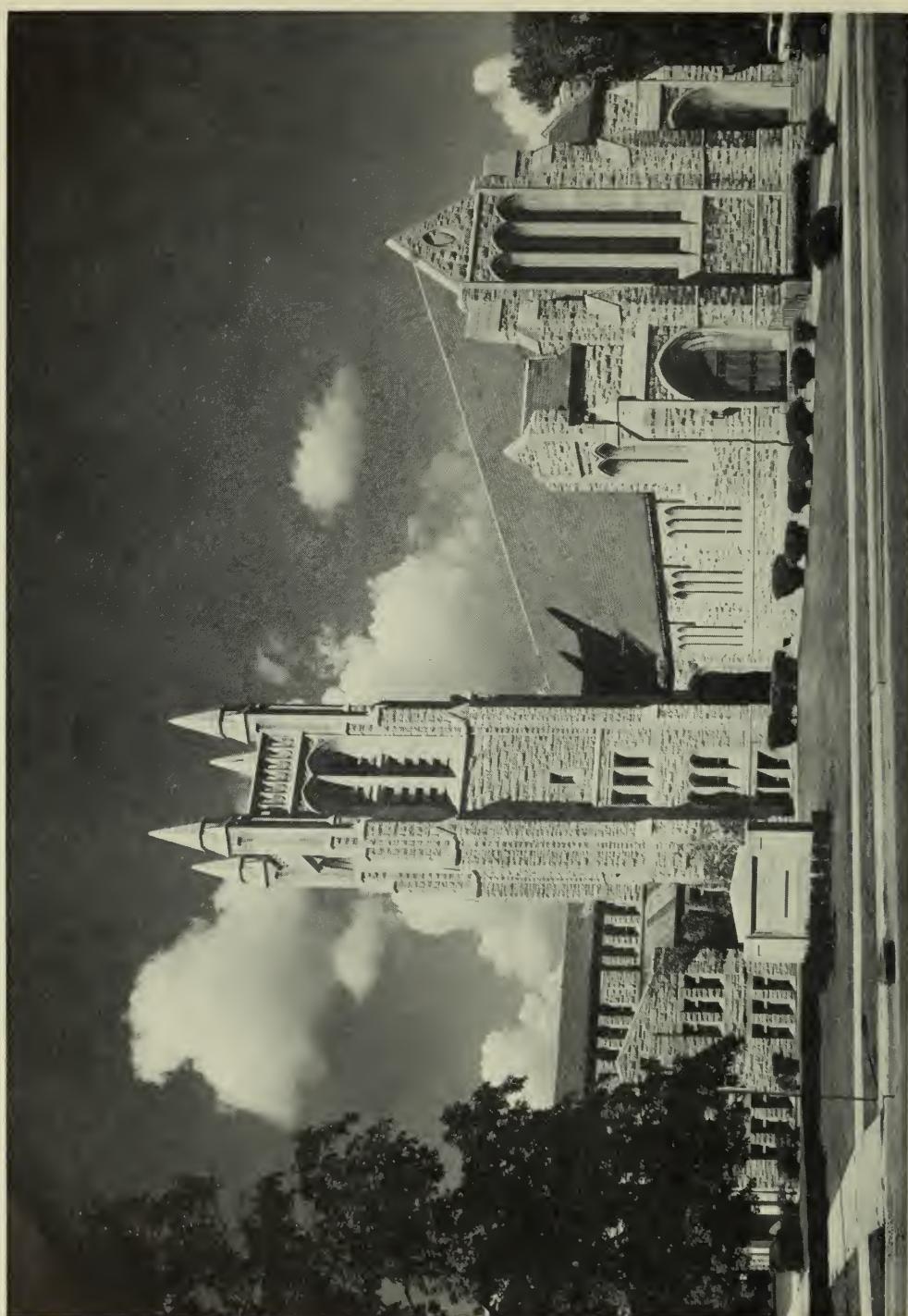
Westminster Presbyterian Church

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

OCTOBER 7, 1956

“THE STORY OF WESTMINSTER”

WRITTEN BY FRANCES FOWLER ALLEN

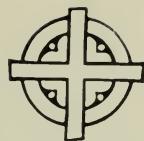


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Smith Hist. Survey

*... Thou wilt light my candle: the Lord
my God will enlighten my darkness."*

*Neither do men light a candle and put it
under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and
it giveth light unto all that are in the
house. Let your light so shine before men
that they may see your good works, and
glorify your Father which is in heaven."*



The Story of Westminster

The candle that is the spirit of Westminster Church is the theme of our story. The candle was first lighted one hundred and twenty-one years ago, in the little prairie town of Springfield, Illinois. It stayed alight through times of war, times of prosperity and times of panic, while the city in which it shone changed from a village to an urban State Capital.

This is the story of how the candle that is Westminster Church shone on, and bore witness, through changing times, with changing methods, to the unchanging truth that "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all . . . If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

"Missionaries to Illinois are urgently needed!"

That was the message brought back from sparsely-settled Illinois to New England missionary societies in the early 1800's. In the entire Illinois territory of 12,000 souls there was not a single permanently settled Presbyterian or Congregational minister.

No wonder! In 1824, it took Eldridge Howe, missionary from Massachusetts who answered that call, two months on horseback to reach Illinois, where he started the first permanent Protestant work in the central area. That he might be free from "worldly cares and avocations," he was given \$8.00 for the month's preaching. Part of this sum was in 1/4's and 1/8's of silver dollars—pieces cut from whole dollars to make change, as the early settlers had no small coins. In 1824, he preached in Springfield. He was the first Presbyterian minister known to have done so.

By 1828, there were enough Presbyterian-minded people in and about Springfield to organize a church. The Sangamon Presbyterian Church came into being. It had a membership of nineteen, most of whom lived in a radius of twenty miles from Springfield. The first services were held in a grove at Second and Adams Streets. Reverend John Bergen of New Jersey came as "stated supply" to this mission church, and directed the first building on Third Street, between Washington and Adams Streets.

The little town of Springfield grew rapidly, and Sangamon Presbyterian Church grew with it. Six or seven years later the time was ripe for Sangamon Presbyterian Church to cease to be a mission church. Who should be installed as its first regular pastor? When this question was debated, it crystallized certain differences between the members. Should the first permanent pastor be Reverend John Bergen? . . . There were those who had another dream.

THE CANDLE IS LIGHTED

As one candle does not lose when it shares its light with another, so Sangamon Presbyterian Church did not lose when, on May 26, 1835, it helped thirty of its members withdraw in peace, to form Second Presbyterian Church (now Westminster.)

Why did these thirty people "agree to disagree"? There were three principal causes: differences in their background, differences in their attitude toward human freedom, and differences in theology.

Early Springfield was settled by two main streams of population. One stream of settlers was from New York and New England. The other stream came from the South—Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, the Carolinas. In superficial manners and customs, Puritan and Southerner didn't always see eye to eye. This was responsible for the first of these differences.

Attitude toward human freedom was the second difference. Even long before the Civil War, the question of slavery was an active issue. In Springfield, it was not uncommon to see recaptured runaway slaves herded back to their owners. Certain church-members of Southern background were accustomed to slavery: those of Yankee Puritan background were generally abolitionists. More than one Second Presbyterian home was a station on the "Underground Railway," the organization which helped runaway slaves escape to Canada. As long as twenty years before the Civil War, in 1843, a member was excommunicated by Second Presbyterian session for "purchasing or dealing in human beings."

The third difference underlying the separation was a matter of doctrine. In general, the Southern settlers belonged to the "Old School" in theology. They were extremely conservative in doctrine. The New Englanders were "New School"—more progressive in theology.

Thirty people of Sangamon Presbyterian Church felt so strongly about these differences that they felt they could no longer worship together. Of course, it was not a clean-cut cleavage. Of those who

remained, by no means all were of one mind regarding these divisive factors, but they were able to compromise their differing opinions to remain with the parent church.

So the thirty people left, apparently with no bitterness or rancor on either part. Indeed, the first minister of Second Presbyterian Church, Reverend Dewey Whitney, conducted the installation service when those who had remained in the original church installed Reverend John Bergen as their pastor.

There is a long and warm history of cooperation between First Presbyterian Church (as the parent Sangamon Presbyterian Church is now called) and Westminster, becoming even closer in the present day. Time has merged the diverse backgrounds; First Church proudly displays its Lincoln pew; and the former doctrinal differences seem hair-splitting.

For one hundred and twenty-one years, now, the two candles have been burning side by side.

What sort of place was this city of nine hundred where the little Second Presbyterian Church had its home? The corner of First and Jefferson Streets was the hub of the business center. There were no telegraphs, telephones, hard roads, not even postage stamps. The sound of the post-rider's horn in front of Elijah Iles General Store and Postoffice at Second and Jefferson Streets brought the townspeople running with produce—grain, honey, beeswax, eggs, even live poultry, to barter for postage. Life was simple: so were the first church buildings.

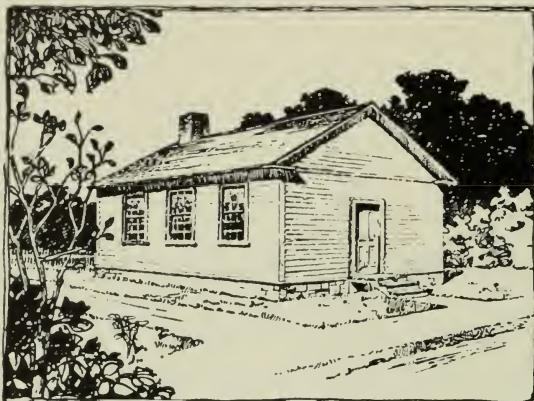
SHELTERS ARE BUILT FOR THE CANDLE

The story of Westminster's four different houses of worship is a story of foresight, courage, and sacrificial giving. Through the years, Westminster has been blessed with forward-looking leaders, ministers, elders, trustees, deacons, and faithful lay members who believe in using brains and ability in the wise handling of this world's goods to the glory of God; and have acted in that faith.

"Let your watchword be order and your beacon, beauty," was said at Westminster's 75th Anniversary. Those words might have been the motto of those who have borne the glorious responsibility of providing shelters for the candle that is the spirit of Westminster.

The first services of Second Presbyterian Church were held in the Court House, a two-story brick structure on the same site as the present Court House. But in less than six months, for \$325.00, the energetic little congregation bought a lot of 78 by 80 feet

on the east side of South Fourth Street between Monroe and Adams Streets. On this lot they erected their first building, a plain one-story frame structure, 20 by 25 feet. It looked like an old-fashioned country schoolhouse.



FIRST BUILDING

1836-1839

"Too far from the center of town," many complained. Forward-looking church members were to hear this same objection many years later, when the church sold its downtown property and moved to its present site at Walnut and Edwards Streets.

"Too far" or not, the congregation which worshipped Sunday after Sunday in the little frame building, and listened to the energetic preaching of their first pastor, Reverend Dewey Whitney, increased rapidly. In just two years it was apparent that a larger house of worship was needed. Fourteen thousand dollars was a large sum for that day. It was more than the aggregate wealth of all the church members, but that was what they spent to build a new brick building just across the street, on the west side of Fourth Street. (Thriftily, they moved the little First Building across the street to the back of the new lot, where it was used as a residence for many years.)

About this Second Building cluster some odd little side-lights of history. One day in the winter of 1840, passers-by were startled to see two men jump suddenly out of one of the church windows. The reason? . . . Since the new State House was not yet completed, Illinois House of Representatives was meeting in the new brick church building of Second Presbyterian Church. That afternoon, a certain vote was scheduled to be taken. One party was anxious this vote should not be taken, and the number of assembled legislators was so slim that there would be no quorum if just two men

could leave, somehow. But supporters of the measure who wanted to bring it to a vote had locked the church doors, to seal the quorum in. There was one thing to do, if one were practical and had long legs! A tall man flung up the church window.

"Jump, Joseph!" he said to Representative Joseph Gillespie.

Joseph jumped, and after him jumped Representative Abraham Lincoln.



SECOND BUILDING

1839-1870

The Second Building was considered one of the finest church buildings in central Illinois for its time. It was made of brick, and seated three hundred people. Its square belfry housed the bell, cast in 1840, gift of Elder Joseph Thayer. For many years this bell, and that of First Presbyterian Church, were the only public fire alarms in the city. They also pealed for all occasions of public joy or sorrow. For forty-eight years this same bell has been waiting to ring out in the new tower which we dedicate in 1956.

The church was heated by wood stoves, and in winter many a Presbyterian lady tripped into her pew carrying a little tin foot-stool into which hot coals had been put just before the service. When the congregation sang, it turned its back on the minister in his high pulpit on the west side of the building, and faced the chorus choir occupying the east gallery, singing hymns to the accompaniment of a bass viol and flute. But when sermon time came, and the congregation sat and faced the high pulpit on the west,

they looked up into the face of their second pastor, a man with the eyes of a mystic and the firm lips of a man of action, Reverend Albert Hale.

Albert Hale tended the candle of Westminster's spirit for twenty-seven years, from 1839 to 1866. When he retired from his high pulpit, he retired only to serve a wider field. As the tablet in our present Narthex says, he then became "bishop of the highways and hedges, a friend of the poor and sorrowing." Seldom used in Protestant circles, therefore more precious, was the title the people themselves spontaneously bestowed upon him—"Father Hale."

"We love to look upon that face which shows no scars of time," the speaker said of him when, aged 85, Father Hale attended the church's 50th Anniversary. When he died in 1891 at the age of 92, the whole city, regardless of creed and condition, mourned his death.

"There was only one Father Hale," one man voiced the thoughts of many, "and there will never be another."

Although he had been classically educated at Yale, the common people must have heard Albert Hale gladly. For eight years before coming to Second Presbyterian Church he had been a home missionary in Illinois, no job for a weakling. It was said of him, "He was one of the Lord's cavalrymen, ready for rough and often dangerous campaigning through flood and forest." To accept the call from Second Presbyterian Church of Springfield, he had declined one from Chicago's First Presbyterian . . . salary, \$1,000.00 per year. Second Presbyterian Church paid him \$800.00.

THE CANDLE SHEDS ITS LIGHT ON WAR, SOCIAL ISSUES, AND HUMAN SUFFERING

Albert Hale was a practical mystic, a man who took his beliefs into the marketplace. He stood up stoutly for principle. His united congregation backed him up.

In 1847, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church denounced the Mexican War as a scheme of aggression and injustice. Dr. Hale preached against this war. The next day, a resolution was introduced in the State Constitutional Convention, meeting in Springfield at the time, denouncing his stand on the war. The resolution was tabled for one week, but meanwhile feeling among the Convention rose high. A week later, Reverend Hale was struck and assaulted by some of the delegates when he was on his way to deliver the morning prayer at the Convention, as its chaplain for the day. His prayer was interrupted by hissing, handclapping,

and cat-calls, but Albert Hale prayed on. Hearing of the outrage, Second Church members denounced the Convention for daring to interfere with their minister's freedom of speech in the pulpit; pointed out this action was undermining the foundations of the American way of life. The brave and outspoken stand of his church turned the tide of sentiment among the delegates. The tabled motion was rescinded, and free speech in the pulpit defended.

Other social problems concerned the growing church. There was then a temperance movement known as the "Washingtonian Society." Its methods make it seem like a forerunner of "Alcoholics Anonymous." The Washingtonians relied on persuasion and mutual help, rather than denunciation. For some time the society held its meetings in Second Presbyterian Church. It is said they were so successful that the price of whiskey in Springfield dropped to sixteen cents a gallon.

At one of these meetings, in 1842, the same young attorney who had once jumped through the window of that church was on the platform to deliver an address on temperance. His appearance was unprepossessing, but he had something to say.

"When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion—kind, unassuming persuasion—should ever be adopted... If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend . . . Assume to dictate to his judgment or to command his action or mark him as one to be shunned and despised, and he will retreat within himself."

These words were spoken in Second Presbyterian Church, in 1840, by the same voice which many years later was to speak, in the same powerful and gentle accents, concerning "malice toward none, charity to all"—the voice of Abraham Lincoln.

The Civil War, which Lincoln had worked so hard to avert, came, and he bade his old Springfield friends "an affectionate farewell." Second Presbyterian Church, true to its Abolitionist principles, sent its sons to fight for the Union. Among the women, all classes and creeds gathered to scrape lint, roll bandages, make garments, and pack boxes for the soldiers. Here meetings were held of the Sanitary Commission, one of the forerunners of the American Red Cross. Chaplains related prison experiences, and collected aid for sick and wounded soldiers. One young man of the congregation packed his clothing in a wooden chest, wrote a will giving his little savings to the treasury of the church, enlisted and marched away to be killed, one of the five from Second Presbyterian Church who did not return.

The candle of Westminster's spirit shone all through these years on human suffering. Its members believed, with practical Saint James: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled'; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" Many a time they acted on that belief. Present-day social agencies in Springfield have cause to thank these amateur, small-scale, but effective efforts.

Consider the little Dorcas Society. Started by Reverend Hale's wife, Abiah, it was made up of women of all denominations. They visited the poor and sick, making garments and ministering to their other wants. Since there were no common schools in those days, they set up an industrial school for poor girls.

In 1840, a group of Portuguese refugees from the island of Madeira had to flee from religious persecution. Many of them had been well-educated, prosperous people in their native country. They had given up everything for their religion. The Portuguese wrote to churches in the United States, inquiring if there were some town in our country where they could have freedom of worship and a chance to earn a living. Jacksonville offered to take a group, but, due to a cholera epidemic there, the refugees had to wait. When they were finally on the way, Jacksonville found it was too large a number to care for without help, so some Portuguese came to Springfield. The women of the Dorcas Society went out and rented houses, furnished them, took food to the hungry and clothing to the ill-clothed. Within a year, the Portuguese refugees became productive, contributing members of their adopted city.

After twenty-four years of such charitable service, the work of the Dorcas Society was merged into that of the Home for the Friendless in 1863. This Home, now re-named and expanded into "Child and Family Service" was the very first social agency in Sangamon County.

Methods of social service have been modernized, but the spirit of service still lives, the candle lighted by the little Dorcas Society of Second Presbyterian Church.

During Civil War days, another large group of refugees came to Springfield. These were the most pitiful type of refugees, children.

It was a winter Sunday morning in 1862. In Second Presbyterian Church, Father Hale had just finished preaching to his congregation—mostly older men, women, and children, for young

men had gone to war. A notice was handed him. Father Hale opened it, read it, closed his hymn book with a bang.

"Three hundred homeless children are here," he announced to his startled congregation. These children, he explained, were escaping from border warfare in Arkansas. A Chaplain Springer of the 10th Cavalry, from Springfield, had arranged to send fifty of these children to Springfield by train, to be cared for. The little Home for the Friendless had arranged to receive them. But, at every stop the train had made on its way North, more children were put on, until, when the train arrived at three o'clock that Sunday morning, there were more than three hundred. Some Springfield women, alerted by the head of the Home, had been working since dawn finding shelters.

"The congregation is dismissed," concluded Father Hale. Could not the women go home, he asked, build up the fires in their cook-stoves, and spend the day cooking food for the refugees, and preparing clothing? Father Hale himself hitched up his horse and



THIRD BUILDING

1871-1907

wagon, and drove from house to house all day collecting loads of bedding and clothing. When night came, every refugee was comfortably cared for.

Father Hale resigned in 1866. Under the next pastor, the church built its third house of worship, on the northwest corner of Fourth and Monroe Streets, for a cost of \$80,000.00.

This was a most ambitious project. When completed, the church had the largest auditorium in Springfield, seating 1500 people. Repeating earlier history, the General Assembly of Illinois met there while the present State Capitol was being built. The cornerstone was laid April 29, 1869, and the first church services were held January 29, 1871. This building contained a fine pipe organ, and Second Presbyterian Church soon became the musical headquarters of the city.

Astounding is the part women played in furnishing this church. In a day when few women possessed private resources, when almost the only way a woman could earn money was by means of her needle or her cookstove, the women of Second Presbyterian bought the organ at a price of \$6,300.00; paid \$1,200.00 for the installation of stained glass, \$300.00 for pulpit furniture, and contributed \$1,000.00 to the building campaign.

WINDS OF THE PANIC BLOW ON THE CANDLE, THE CANDLE FLICKERS

In 1873, when the congregation had been worshipping in its new home for just two years, disaster struck, and the church met what was, perhaps, her hardest hour. This was caused by the Panic of 1873. When it came, the congregation was in debt to the amount of \$31,000.00. A Roman Catholic bishop from Alton came to inspect the church, with the view of buying it at a forced sale. But, as always, men were raised up to match the hour.

"After consulting the session," proclaimed the new pastor, Reverend George H. Fullerton, graduate of Princeton, ex-Army chaplain, "it seemed to me that the first thing to be done was to lift the debt, and that the way to do this was first to trust in God, and second, to *lift!*" Men, women, and children bent to the work.

Look at Elder E. B. Hawley, in a meeting called to raise funds. As a member of the Building Committee of the Third Building, he had given, they said of him, "day and night, mind, soul and strength to it, from the first breaking of the ground for its foundation to the setting of the pulpit in place." Now, it looked as though

the building might have to be sold. Elder Hawley had lost nearly everything in the Panic. What could he do?

"I have no money that I can contribute to this object," said Mr. Hawley in the meeting, when the subscription paper reached him, "but I have two town lots I will gladly turn in. And here is my watch. It's about all else that I own, but I am willing to let it go for the debt."

This spirit animated the whole congregation. "There is a worse thing than debt!" their minister exhorted them, "and that is the sin of remaining under it!"

In five weeks the required amount was subscribed, and the Third Building was saved.

In 1905, it appeared that another move was in order. A lot on the corner of Walnut and Edwards Street was purchased for \$14,000.00. Some considered this site to be "at the end of nowhere."

"No one will ever go way out there to church," they declared, while those in favor of the move recited the drawbacks of a church in the business district—constant noise from the adjacent railroad trains, streetcars, and runs of horse-drawn fire engines nearby. Did even the most far-sighted of the leaders who planned the move picture how far Springfield would soon grow to the southwest, beyond that lot "at the end of nowhere"?

At any rate, the die was cast; the church at Fourth and Monroe Streets was sold for \$80,000.00 cash.

Surely there were many who wept at that last solemn Communion Service in the old Third Building, May 28, 1905. "After thirty-four years of use for the Glory of God and the Service of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." starts the church bulletin for that day. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore," it ends.

It was necessary to give possession of the old church before the new one was completed. For two years there was no home for the candle of Westminster, and the courage of many was sorely tried. In 1906, the current minister left for another charge, and the church was not only without a building, but without a pastor. Other churches came generously to the aid of the homeless congregation. Afternoon services were held during these two years in Central Baptist and First Presbyterian Churches. Services were led by guest preachers, but courageous lay leadership came to the fore and kept the candle alive. Chief among these great lay leaders was Elder Clinton Conkling.

THE CANDLE IS ENSHRINED IN A CHURCHLY SANCTUARY

"Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work," a great architect once said.



FOURTH BUILDING

1908 -

No "little plans" were made. Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson of Boston, foremost church architects in America, were engaged to build the Fourth Building (the present one). It has been called one of the most perfect pieces of adapted Gothic church architecture in America.

Only the best and most durable materials were considered worthy of the building, as evidenced by the beauty of the stone and woodwork after almost fifty years. Bedford limestone was used for the walls, slate for the roof, enduring oak for the pews.

It was decided that there would be no pews rented in this sanctuary, although we know that pews were rented in the Third Building at least as late as 1894. The original cost of ground, building, and furniture exceeded \$101,000.00, creating a debt of \$15,000.00 after applying the \$80,000.00 realized from the sale of the Third Building. This cost does not include the Memorials.

It is tempting to record the Memorials that have enriched and beautified the church through many years. A complete roster of them will be found elsewhere: here we can mention only the windows.

THE TRANSFIGURATION WINDOW is the large central window in the chancel, dominated by the figure of the transfigured Christ. It was the first stained glass window in the newly-completed church, and was the gift of Mr. Clinton L. Conkling.

THE WINDOW OF THE THREE MARYS is the north aisle window nearest the chancel. It depicts Mary the Mother in the center, flanked by the figures of Mary Magdalene (holding the vase of precious ointment) and "the other Mary." It was the gift of Elder Porter Paddock "in loving memory of his wife Janet Berry Paddock and the many noble women who have served this church so faithfully during all the years that are past."

THE WINDOW OF ST. PAUL is next on the north aisle, just east of the Window of the Three Marys. The inscription reads "To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Clinton Levering Conkling, an elder of this church for more than fifty years, and of Georgiana B. Conkling."

THE CONKLING MEMORIAL WINDOW IN THE NARTHEX is the large window in the narthex at the rear of the Sanctuary, opposite the Transfiguration Window in the chancel. It contains twelve medallions in full color of subjects from the life of Christ, and is the gift of Mrs. John S. McCormick of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton L. Conkling.

THE WINDOW OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST is on the south side aisle, nearest the narthex. It was given in memory of Howard I. Herbert Hill, 1903-1951, by his parents, Woodruff and Lulu Hill.

THE WINDOW OF ST. JAMES, DORCAS, AND EUNICE is next to it on the west, on the south aisle. It was given in memory of Plato McCourtney, 1873-1943, by his wife, Flora S. McCourtney.

THE WINDOW OF ST. PETER is the third from the narthex on the south side aisle. It was given in memory of George Leonard Harnsberger and his wife Adeline Houghton Harnsberger.

The architects designed a sanctuary with a divided chancel, giving the place of honor to the precious symbols of cross and

communion table, with organ and choir room on one side, high pulpit on the other. Centrally placed above the chancel is the beautiful stained glass window of the Transfiguration. Thus, Christ is the center, the minister and music which help the congregation to worship Him are at each side. The sanctuary was designed as a church, not as a lecture room or concert hall.

In architectural language, its style is "modified early English Gothic of the 13th century." But all the congregation, versed in architecture or not, knew that they had enshrined Westminster's candle in a churchly church, a true house of worship: that again they had followed the precept, "Let your watchword be order, and your beacon, beauty."

With great rejoicing, the new church was dedicated in March, 1908.

"Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary," read the vigorous new pastor, Reverend A. P. Higley.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it," sang the choir.

"We do now, with gratitude and joy, solemnly consecrate this Church," responded the people.

A beautiful and fitting shelter once again enshrined the candle of Westminster.

Significant in the first years of the new church was the Brotherhood movement, started in 1905, a layman's movement numbering about three hundred men, which was the first of its kind among church men in Springfield. For years they published and sent to every church household an excellent monthly magazine, "The Brotherhood Messenger," edited by Mr. R. Freeman Butts. The Messenger was a treasurehouse of national and local church news, pictures, personals, and inspiration . . . Church weekly bulletins were started shortly after 1896. The Messenger was a much more elaborate project, a real magazine. The work of the Brotherhood is a roll call of activities for the benefit of the growing city. They labored to procure better conditions in the city jail, donated to Washington Street Mission, Gelwicks Mission in China, disaster sufferers at home. Before the day of men's service clubs, their monthly meetings furnished a valuable means of fellowship among church men. The Brotherhood is now a chapter of the National Council of Presbyterian Men.

In 1917, America entered that war which we now call World War I. The honor roll of our church for that war contains 76 names, divided among Army, Navy, Air Service. This group also contains three Y.M.C.A. workers, four nurses, and one Navy

“yeowoman” (forerunner of the WAVES). The people at home worked, too. It became patriotic for women to take their knitting to church, and olive-drab sweaters and socks for the Army grew, as needles clicked in the pews.

With the Armistice of 1918 came the hope for a better world, and the “New Era” movement in Presbyterian life. We have grown more sober now about “wars to end war,” but we can be proud that in two wars since, neither hate nor hysteria has defiled our pulpit. We underwrite hope for a better world by supporting every practical movement of relief and reconstruction for sufferers from war: explore every sound avenue for international understanding.

In 1919, the name “Second Presbyterian Church” was changed by action of the congregation and Presbytery to “Westminster Church.” For a number of years many members had been unhappy about the former name. There is a streak in human nature that resents being called “second” to anything. Behind the word “Westminster” stands historic Westminster Assembly which met at the call of Parliament in Westminster Abbey in 1643, to establish a form of church government “most agreeable to God’s Holy Word.”

The ministry of Dr. Walter R. Cremeans is the second longest, to date, of any of Westminster’s pastors since the 27-year ministry of Father Hale. Dr. Cremeans served Westminster for almost twenty-three years, from 1921 to 1944. He came to Springfield as a young man with a young family from Greeley, Colorado. His was the first family to occupy the Manse, which in 1922 was built on church property just west of the Parish House, on Edwards Street.

“My ministry was marked by a number of national crises which directly affected the church,” recalls Dr. Cremeans. “When I first went to Westminster we were in the upsurge of the prosperity that followed World War I.” His ministry spanned the so-called “Roaring Twenties”; the Great Depression, starting with the market crash of 1929 and continuing through the early 1930’s; the first dark years of World War II. Westminster, though suffering greatly from these body blows, held its own. In the Depression, no church family escaped completely. People tightened their belts and prepared for a grim siege, and expansion of all kinds stopped. Mere maintenance was all most families hoped for during the Depression, but along with struggling to maintain themselves, they maintained their church. “As I look back over it now I am amazed

that we were able to keep up as well as we did," Dr. Cremeans comments. It is not surprising: it was due to devoted leadership. Dr. Cremeans' leadership was also responsible for much closer cooperation between the churches of the city, through the organization of the Springfield Council of Churches. He also led the movement that resulted in the organization of the Illinois Church Council, and became its first president. In 1944 he resigned to devote his gifts for organization to the Presbytery of Baltimore, Maryland, as General Presbyter. Before this, he had served the church through some dark days.

On December 7, 1941, Westminster people had just come home from a Communion Service. They had partaken of the elements, listened to the minister's meditation on "The Cup of Blessing," and closed with singing "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go." At home, their radios burst upon the Communion peace with news of Pearl Harbor, presaging America's entrance into World War II.

This war, with general conscription, and reaching deeply into every aspect of civilian life as well, affected the church more grimly than World War I. One hundred thirty-five Westminster members are on its honor roll, almost three times as many as in the first World War. No fatalities are recorded among our members in World War I—in World War II we lost five young men.

Through these difficult times of runaway prosperity of the Twenties, the Depression, and World War II, Westminster drew on two great sources of vitality, its women's organizations and its youth.

Let us speak first of women, of the past and now.

THE WOMEN TEND THE CANDLE

From the days of Abiah Hale's little Dorcas Society, the women of Westminster have been strong, devoted, and tender in ministering to the candle flame of its spirit.

The first woman's organization mentioned in our church archives, antedating even the Dorcas Society, was a little Circle of Prayer started by the same Abiah Hale, wife of Rev. Albert Hale. Perhaps the Dorcas Society stemmed from this small, devoted group. It would not be the first time that faith came first: then works. In 1862, during Civil War years, mention is made of a Sanitary and Christian Commission, whose members furnished hospital supplies and food for soldiers and prisoners of war, and

of a Ladies Soldiers Aid Society, meeting at Second Presbyterian Church. (There is some indication this may have been the same organization.) At War's end, these groups seem to have merged into "The Ladies Social and Benevolent Society." The social aspect implied by their name was certainly not neglected. The ladies invited their husbands to lavish monthly suppers. But "benevolent" work seems to have been hard and systematic. The Social and Benevolent Society districted Springfield and thoroughly canvassed it, searching out the needy, bringing children to Sunday-school and their parents to church. They prepared missionary boxes, made clothing for the Home for the Friendless, and raised money for the church by sponsoring social entertainments. We have already spoken of the contributions made to the Third Building, both in money and in time spent in sewing the church carpet and pew cushions.

The 1870's showed a growing interest in foreign missions. The Young Ladies Missionary Society was started in 1875. Its activities seem surprising for a period we tend to think of as isolationist, but Westminster itself started as a mission church: it is fitting that its heart should go out to missions. This group studied mission fields, educated a Chinese girl, contributed to schools and hospitals in Japan, Persia, and Laos. In 1879 the Ladies Foreign Missionary Society was formed. The same year saw the birth of the Ladies Home Missionary Society, which focused largely on work in Indian Territory. By 1913 these various missionary societies sensibly merged into the Woman's Missionary Society. A partial list of the women's organizations in Second Presbyterian Church of that period (excluding women's Sunday-school groups) includes Woman's Missionary Society, Pastor's Aid, Westminster Guild, Mission Study Club, and the Gleaners. Among many other church services, the Gleaners, in 1908, furnished the individual communion cups we now use to replace the old common cup. They were solely responsible for preparing the Communion until the formation of the Woman's Association in 1939. During Dr. Cremeans' ministry, Mrs. Cremeans, in 1926, formed the Bess Cremeans Guild, an evening group appealing particularly to young business and professional women.

Women's organizations, however, even church ones, tend to become stratified, to be comprised of a specific age group, or to become such a closely-knit clan that it is difficult for a new member to find where she belongs in the women's work of the church, or to quickly feel at home. During the 1930's, many leading

women of Westminster became concerned about this situation. Their answer was the Women's Association, formed in 1939, and in force at the present date. Westminster was among the first in the Presbyterian denomination to attempt such an organization for all the women in the church. This system is now almost universally used in our denomination. Every woman of Westminster automatically belong to the Women's Association, which holds monthly meetings as a body. The Association, in turn, is subdivided into Circles. The member has a choice of an afternoon or evening circle, fitting her personal schedule; except for that the division, made every two years to avoid stagnation, is by lot. Financial contributions are made through the Circles to the budget of the Association as a whole: projects and responsibilities are decided on by the elected Association board and apportioned among the Circles. The small Circles make it easy for newcomers to become integrated into the group; the impersonal dividing up every two years brings together—for fellowship, service, enrichment—the woman whose forebears worshipped in the First Building and the woman who moved to Springfield last week with a letter from a church in another State. New forms—but the same devoted tending of the candle that is Westminster.

THE CANDLE SHINES ON YOUTH

Throughout its history, Westminster has known its youth to be its greatest treasure, more precious far than its land or buildings. Different means of bringing out youth's great potentialities have been used through the years.

Although there is a hint of an earlier group which had lapsed, the first young people's society in our church on record was started in the Third Building in 1892. This group met Sunday evenings, before evening church service. A program of their activities for the season of 1882-3 shows Second Presbyterian youth to be made of ambitious and sturdy stuff! They had fourteen programs on Ancient Egypt, in which each member participated. As well as this solid fare, who can doubt these meetings had a lighter side? Surely, friendship and romance blossomed under the inscrutable stare of the Sphynx!

In 1913, during Dr. Higley's pastorate, in the present building, the first Christian Endeavor Society was organized, sparked by four young people who had attended a conference at Winona. Since then, Christian Endeavor (now Tuxis) has had an uninter-

rupted existence in our church. Camps and conferences have drawn increasing numbers of our young people each year. There is also a Junior High School group for seventh and eighth-graders, one Boy Scout Troop, a Scout Explorer Group, one Cub Pack, two Brownie Troops and two Girl Scout Troops.

In the 1920's, Westminster had an outstanding church-sponsored dramatic group, the Westminster Players. Besides indoor winter seasons in which they performed their plays in the parish house, many members still remember the traditional outdoor dramatization, "The Vision of Sir Launfal," performed on the lawn between the Manse and the parish house, the church's stone walls furnishing a perfect backdrop, with Sir Launfal riding off on his pilgrimage on a real live horse. Traditional, too, was "The Prophets," so worshipful in tone that it was fittingly performed in the sanctuary . . . tableaus after the famous mural of "The Prophets" by John Singer Sargent, lines taken from their writings, the whole culminating in Isaiah's ecstatic vision of the coming Messiah.

In 1935, at the 100th Anniversary of the founding of our church, a pageant was written, directed, costumed, and acted by Westminster lay people, enlisting practically all the available talent in the church.

Drama and pageantry have been a tool of the church from earliest times: Westminster's youth grew by using these arts.

MUSIC—HANDMAIDEN OF THE CANDLE OF THE SPIRIT

Along with drama and pageantry, music has always been a handmaiden of worship. Westminster has a long and precious musical history.

In the earliest services, music was furnished by congregational singing, and later by a chorus choir, accompanied (one suspects, rather thinly) by a bass viol and a flute. Later, in the time of the Second Building, it is indicated that a Mr. Estabrook had a famous chorus choir and some notable rehearsals of great oratorios were led by him. It was when the congregation moved into the Third Building, however, that our church became the musical headquarters of the Springfield of that day. The new pipe organ was considered the finest in the city, and many musical events, other than strictly church occasions, were held in the church auditorium. During the thirty-four years of the Third Building, the formal musical services of the church varied from a simple quartette, with

organ accompaniment, through a chorus choir of twenty voices, then a double quartette. In the 1880's, under the direction of William Dodd Chenery, the church boasted a thirty-piece orchestra and large chorus choir. Cantatas, oratorios, and special song services drew such large crowds that the 1500 seating capacity of the church could not accommodate them.

When the congregation moved to the present building in 1908, Mr. R. Albert Guest, who had been organist for some years, became Director of Music. The church enjoyed the vocal art of many outstanding soloists. Vesper Musicales became an institution. Unforgettable, too, is the music of the Westminster Trio, Mr. John Taylor with his violin, Mr. John Stewart with the cello, and Mr. Guest at the organ.

"I always associate stringed music with beautiful Westminster Church," reminisces former pastor George T. Gunter.

After Mr. Guest's retirement in 1927, Mrs. Lindle Wolaver served as organist, with Mr. George Killius as violinist, and Mrs. Ralph Pierce as soloist. Mrs. J. Orville Taylor came as organist in 1946.

In 1942, greater lay participation was again gained in music of the church, by the organization of the present Chancel Choir under the direction of Mr. John Thompson. The choir has a roster of thirty voices, and is one of the most faithful of the church groups. A men's choir of thirty was organized in 1950, and furnishes music for special occasions. Our services are enriched by occasional special solos. The musical mainstays are Mrs. Taylor at the organ and Mr. Killius with the violin.

A Junior Choir sings for special services—another way of enlisting young people to serve the candle of the spirit.

But the backbone of young people's Christian education is, as always, the Church School.

CHILDREN ARE TAUGHT TO SERVE THE CANDLE OF THE SPIRIT

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

The Church School was born right along with Second Presbyterian Church itself. The paint was hardly dry on the little First Building before a Sunday-school was organized, in which every member of the congregation was either a pupil or a teacher. True,

methods then were different. It is reported that in the early days, the pupils' seats were arranged in tiers in the balcony, much like circus seats, and the bell for assembly and dismissal hung over the children's heads, with a long rope dangling from it. Perhaps many a Sunday-school boy, oppressed by Catechism memorizing, longed to activate the dismissal bell by reaching up and giving the rope a hearty tug!

Nevertheless, youth then, as now, was earnest, idealistic, eager to serve. After the assassination of President Lincoln, the Lincoln Monument Association asked the Sunday Schools of the state to contribute to a Monument Fund. Illinois Sunday Schools responded, to the tune of \$20,000.00. Second Presbyterian Church Sunday-school children contributed \$310.45—no small sum, in pennies.

Then, as now, religious education was sweetened for the young by good times. There were Sunday-school "sociables" in summer, oyster suppers in winter, held often in beautiful spacious homes of some members. A train carried the Sunday School to the big summer picnic at Piasa Bluffs on the Illinois River. Later picnics at Crows Mill were reached by horse and buggy.

During the two difficult years between leaving the Third and the completion of the Fourth Building, when the congregation had no home, the Sunday School, which had to meet at inconvenient hours in borrowed quarters, suffered. Enrollment fell to about fifty. Immediately after moving to the present building, attendance zoomed. In 1910, the Sunday School had 530 members, with an average attendance of nearly 300. In that year, 64 young people were received directly from the Sunday School into church membership. Our present enrollment, in 1956, is 475. (This figure does not include adults, as does the earlier one; it refers to young people only through high school age.) This is a healthy advance over the 1955 enrollment of 367.

That congregation which moved into the Fourth Building at Walnut and Edwards, in 1908, found a parish house in which commodious, even lavish, preparation had been made for its youth—their religious education and their social activities, as well as those of the congregation. No longer did the Infant Class shatter its parents' peace of mind, as they had in the Third Building, by racing up a pie-shaped, unrailed staircase to an upper room. They met, at first, in the new church basement, where little red chairs around sandtables, ample wall space for pictures and maps, made Bible stories more memorable and attractive. The same room

doubled as diningroom for church suppers and parties. At the big Sunday-school Christmas party, how breathtaking it was to hear Santa Claus' bells jingling upstairs ever so long before he came through a paper fireplace between diningroom and kitchen! Upstairs, divided classrooms off the large assembly hall gave the necessary privacy, at first.

Not many years later, however, the Sunday School was bursting at its seams, and by the 1940's, in spite of many modernization programs and installation of more and more room-dividers, the Sunday School was seriously overcrowded. Junior boys had to meet in the church kitchen, where their harried teacher struggled to keep them from turning off and on the gas stoves. Adult classes met in the Sanctuary itself, unhappily violating the principle laid down by the builders of the present building. "The church is designed for and intended to be used as a place of worship, and for religious services only." Primary classes recited almost elbow to elbow in the old balcony of the parish house. Congregational dinners must be served in shifts. Office space for the minister, secretary of Religious Education, and full-time church staff was inconvenient and inadequate for a growing church.

No wonder our new parish house, which we dedicate in 1956, became necessary!

On October 8, 1944, Reverend Edward Walter Ziegler was installed as pastor. Coming to Westminster during the closing months of World War II, the new minister and his family became acquainted with the congregation, many of whose members were living under great stress and strain, and some who had suffered the loss of loved ones in the war. At war's end, the church began to welcome its returning sons and daughters to an active place in its life and work.

In 1947, an extensive program of repairs and replacements was carried out at a total cost of approximately \$25,000.00. This sum was raised by contributions from the members, and from a generous gift of Mrs. Katharine C. McCormick, whose father, Clinton L. Conkling, already mentioned, was chairman of the committee under whose direction the present building was constructed. The stone work of the entire structure was pointed up, a new roof put on the parish house, electric wiring in the parish house replaced, a cement floor laid in the dining room, the heating system re-conditioned, a new gas-burning furnace installed, leaded windows repaired, extensive repairs made on the organ, and a new console gift of Mrs. McCormick in memory of her parents, was installed.

THE CANDLE SHINES ON YOUNG ADULTS

While not neglecting other ages, there has been a growing emphasis in Westminster during the last twelve years, on the ministry to young adults, primarily to young parents and their families. National as well as local trends cause the emphasis on service to this important group.

Generally speaking, young men coming back from World War II were a responsible lot. Unlike some World War I veterans, they didn't pose as a "lost generation." They seemed attracted by life's enduring values; were anxious to complete their education, marry, rear families. Alert and aggressive churchmanship by ministers and laity has brought many of these young families into Westminster. The task of integrating them into their place in the church's work is given high priority.

To meet the needs of an expanding, seven-day-a-week church, the following evening fellowship groups have come into being: Adult Fellowship for middle-aged people; Pairdoffs for young married couples; Single Young Adults. To accommodate couples with young children, two Sunday worship services, with nursery facilities available, were started in December, 1955. Nursery service and older children's groups are provided for meetings where parents attend.

With this expansion of *activities* for the Kingdom, expansion of *facilities* for the work of the Kingdom became vital.

"Mr. Chairman, I believe the people are ready."

So said Mr. Philip Morgan, at a special congregational meeting on May 19, 1954. What lay behind these words?

In June, 1953, Mr. Jay Parr, Superintendent of the Church School, Mr. Byron Gaines, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Doctor Ziegler, had talked about the building program of Westminster, and decided to ask the Session to appoint a committee to study the building needs of the church, assess its financial resources with relation to these building needs and make recommendations to the Session and Board of Trustees. This study committee consisted of Jay Parr, Chairman, Edward P. Easley, Mrs. Robert Hitz, Philip B. Morgan and Arthur H. Gottschalk.

After long and thorough preparation, plans were drawn up, widely circulated among the congregation, hearings were conducted, and a congregational meeting was called on May 19, 1954, to decide if authority should be granted to the church officers to proceed with a financial campaign, and, in the event

of success, proceed with the remodeling of the parish house and erection of an addition, in keeping with the general principles set forth in the preliminary drawings.

"Tonight we are challenged," Mr. Morgan concluded his moving address at that meeting. "If we meet the challenge to make the house of God more functional and beautiful and more adequate to meet the demands upon it . . . if we meet this challenge with enthusiasm, it will be a great victory. . . . With this victory will come by-products of great significance to spice the achievement and give it purpose and value.

1. We shall prove that we are a grateful people not content always to live on our inheritance.
2. We shall demonstrate our faith in the future of Westminster Church.
3. We shall behold the miracle of seeing that we have strength and vigor beyond our dreams.
4. We shall discover anew that God needs us to get His work done.
5. We shall find new delight and joy in going to church—it will indeed be with gladness that we go to the house of the Lord.

Mr. Chairman, I believe the people are ready."

The vote was taken. The plan was approved unanimously.

Consequently, in June and July of 1954, a successful campaign was conducted for the sum of \$220,000.00. The firm of Beaver Associates of Chicago was employed as fund-raising consultants. Mr. Edgar Gwin was Chairman of the Building Committee. Other committee members were Mrs. Irby Shepherd, devoting herself especially to the beautiful new chapel; Mr. Edward Easley, Mr. Jay Parr, Mr. Alvin Skoog, and Mr. Clyde Knock.

The Campaign Executive Committee consisted of Arthur H. Gottschalk as Chairman, with George E. Hatmaker, Robert A. Hitz, Jay A. Parr, and Philip B. Morgan.

Of the families of Westminster, 72% made subscriptions. The firm of Hadley and Worthington, Architects, designed the new and remodeled parish house, in keeping with the original architectural style of the church. General contractors were the Jones-Blythe Construction Company. The ground-breaking ceremony was held on December 10, 1954, and the remodeled and new building was occupied in December, 1955.

Something further was needed to truly complete Westminster Church building, according to the architects' plan and the dream of the first builders. That was the tower. When the present

building was under construction in the early 1900's, much to Mr. Conkling's regret, and that of the congregation, shortage of funds made it impossible to finish the tower as planned. Therefore, when the building was dedicated in 1908, the tower was forty-four feet short of the designed height. In the hope that the tower would be completed at some future date, the old church bell from the Second building, cast in 1840, was stored in a room above the minister's study. For forty-eight years, Westminster stood with a "temporary" roof over the incompletely tower.

Through the years, Mrs. Katharine C. McCormick of Pittsburgh, daughter of Mr. Conkling, has kept in close touch with the life and work of Westminster. When, in 1954, she learned of the projected building plans, she offered the necessary funds to finish the construction of this tower according to the original plans. The offer was gratefully accepted, and construction on the "Katharine C. McCormick Tower" began. The tower has been given to Westminster in memory of Mr. Clinton Levering Conkling, and his wife, Mrs. Georgiana Barrell Conkling.

As we dedicate this building and tower in 1956, we think of the "cloud of witnesses" which surround us—the little band of thirty who dreamed a dream and started our church; its earnest and devoted ministers; its great-hearted and faithful lay men and women; its eager and aspiring youth.

"Let your watchword be order, and your beacon, beauty," they said in our church of long ago. We answer with the prayer, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

May the candle that is the spirit of Westminster shine on, a small but brave reflection of that "light that shineth in darkness, and the darkness is not able to put it out."

MINISTERS

1836-1839.....	Dewey Whitney
1839-1866.....	Albert Hale
1867-1870.....	Gilbert H. Robertson
1872-1874.....	Charles D. Shaw
1875-1879.....	George H. Fullerton
1879-1881.....	Loyal J. Hays
1881-1895.....	David S. Johnson
1896-1899.....	Dwight C. Hanna
1900-1906.....	W. Francis Irwin
1906-1912.....	Adelbert P. Higley
1912-1917.....	George T. Gunter
1918-1921.....	S. Willis McFadden
1921-1944.....	Walter R. Cremeans
1944-.....	Edward W. Ziegler



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